

Broadcast of Opinions Contrary to U.S. Policy

The Director, AFIS, is charged with ensuring "a free flow of information and entertainment programming to overseas DoD personnel and their family members without censorship, propagandizing, or manipulation."

This essentially means that U.S. Armed Forces personnel, DoD civilians, and their family members serving in all overseas locations have a basic right to the SAME INFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION they would be receiving from their radio and television sets if they were residing anywhere in the United States.

In its agreements with U.S. commercial and public networks, the Department of Defense has assured these entities that AFRTS shall protect the integrity of all news programs and materials and that no change shall be made in the editorial content of any news programs and materials used. Additionally, AFRTS news policy shall be guided by the principle of fairness. This principle requires outlets to provide "reasonable opportunities" for the presentation of conflicting views on important controversial issues. This principle applies to issues rather than persons and does not require "equal opportunities."

The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service Broadcast Center in Los Angeles is the only source authorized to negotiate for, procure, and distribute commercial and public broadcasting programming for the use of AFRTS Outlets. AFRTS-BC follows the lead of the commercial networks in program selection. NBC, CBS, and ABC all have "standards and practices" departments that have served them, the advertisers, and the public well over the years. It would be inappropriate and presumptuous of AFRTS-BC to act as arbiters of taste and propriety. If it did, it would soon lose credibility with AFRTS listeners and viewers. This would damage its effectiveness and impact negatively on the morale of men and women serving overseas.

It is not at all unusual for AFRTS to be the target of complaints about the form and substance of the programs it airs. AFIS has defended the integrity of the AFRTS operation as an extension of the same radio and television service the AFRTS audiences could expect at home. That integrity has earned AFRTS a valid reputation as a totally credible voice. Ever since World War II our Service men and women overseas have relied on AFRTS for a free flow of information and entertainment without censorship, propagandizing, sensationalism, or manipulation. Our military broadcast personnel must do everything they can to ensure that AFRTS remains this way.